

Painesville residents ^{NH 5-3-11} speak on water fee

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Members of the public on Monday made their feelings known about Painesville's impending capital improvement fee.

While most residents who spoke out at Monday's City Council meeting understand the need to replace the city's aging water distribution system, they don't approve of the proposed method.

As currently written, the fee would be a flat \$10 per month addition to the water bills of all Painesville City water customers.

But, as residents pointed out, some see that plan as unfair for certain water customers.

"You can't do this as a flat \$10 per meter (fee)," resident Angelo Cimaglio said. "If I'm going to take a shower, someone in Tropical Village (Apartments) is going to take one, and I'm paying more for it."

Because the fee would be accessed on a per-meter basis, multi-residential dwellings, like apartment complexes with many residents, would pay the same fee as a customer at a home with just a few residents.

Additionally, those in attendance had concerns that the fee is unfair to customers who use very little water.

"I'm one person in a house and pay about \$10," resident Don Ware said. "You're doubling my bill."

City leaders reminded residents that the fee is still being fine-tuned and council will take residents' requests — the most glaring being a fee based on use instead of a flat fee — into consideration.

City Manager Rita McMahon said the city continues to look into alternative plans to help fund the \$15 million worth of necessary water line improvements.

Additionally, she said the city has made news of the fee known to customers by including information about it on customers' bills over the past few weeks.

Councilman Jim Fodor thanked water customers for their feedback and urged them to work corroboratively, not combatively, with council as they work toward implementing the fee.

Council will continue discussing the fee at a work session scheduled for May 9 in Council Chambers.

Separately, Council approved a 2 percent pay increase for Painesville Municipal Court's Clerk of Court, Nick Cindric.

The move proved controversial as resident Ray Sternot expressed concern that the city was giving out raises in the face of a budget crisis.

For more from residents at the meeting, go to  www.News-Herald.com